

AGENDA

Board of Game and Inland Fisheries
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, Virginia 23228

January 24, 2019
9:00 am

Call to Order and Welcome, reading of the Mission Statement and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

1. Recognition of Employees and Others
2. Approval of the October 25, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes **Final Action**
3. Public Comments – Non Agenda Items
4. Committee Meeting Reports:

Wildlife, Boat, and Law Enforcement:

- Commercial Harvest of Snapping Turtle Regulation **Final Action**
- Proposed Migratory Bird Regulations **Action**
- Public Scoping Period Summary
- Elk Management Plan **Action**
- Update on Clinch Mountain WMA Road Access
- DGIF Bear Program Activities
- CWD Update

Finance, Audit, & Compliance:

- Boat Registration and Title Proposal
- FY 19 Second Quarter Finance Report

Final Action

5. Closed Session
6. Director's Report
7. Chairman's Report
8. Additional Business/Comments
9. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, March 21, 2019
10. Adjournment

Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Board of Game and Inland Fisheries
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, Virginia 23228

October 25, 2018
9:00 am

Present: Dr. Mamie Parker, **Vice Chairman**, Mr. Leon Boyd, Mr. John Daniel, Mr. Ryan Brown, Ms. Karen Terwilliger, Mrs. Nicole Butterworth, Mr. H. S. Caudill; Mrs. Catherine Claiborne, Mr. G. K. Washington, Mr. Brian Vincent, **Absent:** Mr. Douglas Dear; **Executive Director:** Mr. Robert W. “ Bob” Duncan; **Senior Leadership Team:** Mr. Tom Guess, Mr. Lee Walker, Dr. Gray Anderson, Dr. Mike Bednarski, Major Scott Naff, Major Bryan Young, Mr. Darin Moore

Ms. Kelci Block, Assistant Attorney General attended the Board meeting.

The Chairwoman opened the meeting at 9:00 am. The Chairwoman welcomed the three New Board Members, Mr. John Daniel, II, Ms. Karen Terwilliger, and Mr. G. K. Washington to their first meeting and welcomed everyone else attending the Board meeting today and noted for the record that a quorum was present for the meeting and announced there would be a Closed Session. The Chairwoman called on New Board member Mr. G. K. Washington to read the Mission Statement and Officer Tyler Blanks to lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Recognition of Employees and Others: The Chairwoman called on Director Bob Duncan for recognitions.

The Director called on Dr. Gray Anderson who introduced Mr. Al Bourgeois the 2018 Wildlife Biologist of the Year.

The Director called on Dr. Mike Bednarski who introduced Mr. Dan Wilson the 2018 Aquatic Biologist of the Year.

The Chairwoman called on Mrs. Catherine Claiborne for a recognition. Mrs. Claiborne called the Director, Mr. Bob Duncan to the podium. Mrs. Claiborne made remarks on the Director’s DGIF tenure and on behalf of The Board presented Director Bob Duncan his 40 year Service Award.

Approval of the August 22, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes:

The Minutes of the August 22, 2018 have been distributed and posted to the website for review. The Chairwoman called for a motion to approve the minutes. Mrs. Claiborne made a motion to approve the August 22, 2018 Board minutes as submitted. It was seconded by

Mr. Boyd. Ayes: Parker, Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Brown.

Public Comments (Non-Agenda Items): The Chairman called for Public Comments

- Mr. Steve Nicely from Clifton Forge, VA spoke concerning Habitat & Bear
- Mr. Matthew Gray from Richmond, VA spoke on fox pen investigation

Committee Meeting Reports:

Wildlife, Boat, and Law Enforcement Committee:

The Chairman called on Mr. Ryan Brown to report on the Wildlife, Boat, and Law Enforcement Committee.

Mr. Brown reported that the Wildlife, Boat, and Law Enforcement Committee had met on Wednesday, October 24, 2018 and called on Dr. Gray Anderson to present the Commercial Harvest of Snapping Turtle Regulation

After discussion and comments, Dr. Parker thanked Dr. Anderson for his presentation.

Kurt Butler from Mechanicsville, VA spoke regarding the Turtle Harvest Regulation

Dr. Parker called for a motion, Mr. Brown made a motion, Ms. Chairwoman, I move that the Board approve for Public Comment the Commercial Harvest of Snapping Turtle Regulation. It was seconded by Mr. Caudill. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

Mr. Brown called on Dr. Anderson to present the Wildlife Regulation Review Cycle Outline and Schedule.

After discussion and comments, Dr. Parker thanked Dr. Anderson for his presentation.

Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee:

Dr. Parker, the Chairwoman of the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee reported that the Finance, Audit, and Compliance committee met on Wednesday, October 24, 2018 and called on Mr. Darin Moore to report the FY 19 First Quarter Finance Report.

After discussion and comments, Dr. Parker thanked Mr. Moore for his presentation.

Dr. Parker called on Mr. Darin Moore to report on License proposal.

After discussion and comments, Dr. Parker thanked Mr. Moore for his presentation.

Dr. Parker called for a motion, Mr. Caudill made a motion, Ms. Chairwoman, I move that the Board approve for Public Comment the proposed changes to DGIF's Sportsman's License Fee. (To change the Sportsman's License fee from \$133.00 (full cost of each license individually) to \$110.00 (minus the \$1.00 agent fee to \$109.00). It was seconded by Mr. Brown. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

Mr. Moore presented the Lifetime License Proposal.

After discussion and comments, Dr. Parker thanked Mr. Moore for his presentation.

The Chairwoman called for a motion, Mrs. Claiborne made a motion, Ms. Chairwoman, I move that the Board approve for Public Comment the proposed changes to DGIF's Lifetime License Fee for Resident and Non-Resident Licenses. (The Lifetime License Proposal to increase all Resident Lifetime (Hunting, Fishing, Trout, and Trapping) Licenses by \$5.00 each, and all Nonresident Lifetime (Hunting, Fishing, Trout, and Trapping) Licenses by \$25.00 each.) (All Disabled Lifetime License will not be raised). It was seconded by Mr. Daniel. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

Boat Registration and Title Proposal: The Chairwoman called on Mr. Darin Moore for a presentation.

Mr. Moore presented the Boat Registration and Title Proposal.

After discussion and comments, Dr. Parker thanked Mr. Moore for his presentation.

The Chairwoman called for a motion. Mr. Daniel made a motion, Ms. Chairwoman, I move that the Board approve for Public Comment the proposed changes to DGIF's Boat Registration and Title changes. (To increase by \$5.00 all boat registrations, duplicate registrations, changes in boat motor, and , duplicate titles, and increase by \$3.00 all titles, supplemental lien titles, and transfers.) It was seconded by Mr. Brown. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

Education, Planning, and Outreach: The Chairwoman called on Mr. Brian Vincent for a report.

Mr. Vincent reported that the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee met on Wednesday, October 24, 2018. He reported that Mr. Lee Walker gave a Media Services Report and a Paddle Sports Update and Mr. Brian Moyer gave an R-3 Update – Restore the Wild and the Director reported on America's Wildlife Values Survey and announced that the Department had signed on to Co-Sponsor Fish and Wildlife Health Issues.

Closed Session:

The Chairman called on Ms. Terwilliger to read the Closed Session Motion.

Closed Meeting Motion
October 25, 2018

Madam Chair,

I move that the Board go into a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.3 of the Code of Virginia for discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the Board, with respect to:

(i) Real property located in: Accomack, Grayson, Nelson, and Northampton Counties.

And Finally, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.1 of the Code of Virginia for discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries specifically regarding:

(i) The performance of the Director.

This closed meeting will be attended only by members of the Board. However, pursuant to Section 2.2-3712(F), the Board requests legal counsel, the Department Executive Director, the Real Property Managers, and the Assistant Chief of Wildlife, Wetland Project Leader, and the agency Videographer as it believes their presence will reasonably aid the Board in its consideration of topics that are the subject of the meeting.

It was seconded by: Mr. Boyd. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

The Board went into Closed session at 10:45 am

The Board reconvened at 1:15 pm

The Board Chairwoman called on Mrs. Claiborne to read the Certification of Closed Meeting.

*Certification of Closed Meeting
October 25, 2018*

WHEREAS, the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries conducted a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provision of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code requires a certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted on conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Board.

It was seconded by Mr. Brown. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

The Board Secretary conducted the following voice roll call vote:

Mr. Caudill – Aye
Ms. Butterworth- Aye
Mr. Vincent – Aye
Mr. Brown – Aye
Dr. Parker -Aye
Mrs. Claiborne – Aye
Mr. Daniel - Aye
Mr. Washington – Aye
Ms. Terwilliger – Aye
Mr. Boyd - Aye

The Chairwoman called on Board member Ryan Brown for motions, Ms. Chairwoman, I move that the Board authorize the Director to proceed to acquire by gift approximately 36.5 acres of land in Grayson County, Virginia, and such acquisition shall be according to state procedures. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Parker, Brown, Nay: Caudill

Ms. Chairwoman, I move that the Board authorize the Director to proceed to declare approximately 8 acres of land in Nelson County, Virginia, surplus property, and such authorization shall be according to state procedures. It was seconded by Mr. Boyd. Ayes: Claiborne, Daniel, Terwilliger, Butterworth, Vincent, Washington, Boyd, Caudill, Parker, Brown

Director's Report: The Director reported on:

- JLARC Update
- Jordan Point Dam in Lexington, VA Agreement signed
- Called on Uwe Weindel to report on Chandler's Mill Dam, Hurricane damage At King & Queen Fish Hatchery, and update on work at Clinch Mountain Road
- Called on Becky Gwynn to report on Hampton Roads Tunnel project
- Called on Becky Gwynn to report on America's Wildlife Values Survey

Chairwoman's Report: Dr. Parker congratulated the new Board members for attending their First Board meeting and thanked other Board members for their attendance and comments and interest and thanked the staff for their presentations.

The Chairwoman asked if anyone had any announcements or comments.

- Director Bob Duncan thanked the Board again for his 40 year Service Award
- Mr. Ryan Brown requested that the Board recognized Mr. David Whitehurst at the January 24, 2019 meeting on his retirement.

The Chairwoman announced the next Board meeting will be Thursday, January 24, 2019 at 9:00 am and adjourned the meeting at 2:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Frances Boswell

4VAC15-360-30. Taking of snapping turtles, crayfish and hellgrammites for sale.

SUMMARY: The proposal is to identify explicitly the conditions under which the commercial harvest of snapping turtles should occur to be sustainable in Virginia.

PROPOSED LANGUAGE OF AMENDMENT:

1 4VAC15-360-30. Taking of snapping turtles, crayfish and hellgrammites for sale.

- 2 A. It shall **only** be lawful to take and sell snapping turtles ~~and hellgrammites~~ with a Permit to
3 Collect and Sell Snapping Turtles and Hellgrammites ~~or a Permit to Hold and Sell Certain~~
4 ~~Wildlife under such restrictions and conditions as the board may prescribe.~~ The director may
5 issue, deny, modify, suspend, or revoke a Permit to Collect and Sell Snapping Turtles and
6 Hellgrammites. Such permits shall be valid provided that the harvest of snapping turtles is
7 not otherwise prohibited by state or federal law or regulation. To be eligible to harvest
8 snapping turtles, an applicant must be a Virginia resident and submit an Annual Report.
9 1. It shall be unlawful to harvest any snapping turtle with less than a 13-inch curved
10 carapace length.
11 2. It shall be unlawful to harvest snapping turtles from October 1 through May 31.
12 3. It shall be unlawful for permit holders to take any species other than snapping turtles.
13 4. The department will issue a maximum of 25 permits per year. No more than one
14 individual residing at a single address may be issued a permit. Permits are not
15 transferable.
16 5. It shall be unlawful to operate more than 20 traps per permit. The permit number or name
17 and address of permittee shall be marked on all traps.
18 6. Hoop nets or similar homemade traps shall be the only lawful form of trapping snapping
19 turtles. Hoop nets or other traps shall not exceed 6 feet in length with a throat opening
20 that does not exceed 36 inches.
21 7. Permit holders must check all traps at least once each day and remove all captured
22 animals.
23 8. Permit applications will be issued in the order received, to the maximum annual number.
24 9. Failure to comply with the harvest and sales reporting requirements as detailed in
25 conditions of the permit shall be unlawful and may result in immediate permit revocation
26 and loss of harvest privileges for a minimum of one year.
27 10. It shall be the permit holder's responsibility to report "No Activity" when no activity
28 occurs during the permit period.
29 B. It shall **only** be lawful to take and sell hellgrammites with a Permit to Collect and Sell
30 Snapping Turtles and Hellgrammites or a Permit to Hold and Sell Certain Wildlife under
31 such restrictions and conditions as the board may prescribe. It shall be lawful to hold and sell
32 crayfish with a Permit to Hold and Sell Certain Wildlife under such restrictions as the board
33 may prescribe.

RATIONALE: In 2017, researchers from Virginia Commonwealth University completed a four-year study of the sustainability of commercial snapping turtle harvest, funded by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The primary conclusion of that work, coupled with information submitted by harvesters in annual permit reports, is that the unregulated (unlimited) harvest of snapping turtles is not sustainable, especially in Virginia's coastal waters. Without some limitations placed on the industry, local populations of snapping turtles have been and will be lost, impacting both the industry itself and, importantly, the ecosystems in which these turtles live. Limited regulation is preferred (by staffs and by the harvesters) to a moratorium on commercial harvest. A moratorium would protect and allow local populations of snapping turtles to rebound and grow, but would impact this industry substantially. The DGIF's primary goal is to manage the harvest of breeding adults at or below 50,000 pounds per year so that snapping turtle populations can be maintained or increase slightly while allowing for commercial harvest.

13-inch curved carapace minimum length: Results from the 4-year study has indicated that this shell length is the minimum size needed to maintain an increasing population of snapping turtles, which allows for the continued commercial harvest. This metric is the most important one in managing the commercial harvest of turtles and will be re-evaluated in 7-10 years.

Virginia residency: From 2009-2013, out-of-state harvesters were responsible for as much as 70% of the total annual reported harvest of snapping turtles in Virginia. During this five-year period, approximately 400,000 pounds of turtles was harvested. Limiting commercial harvest to Virginia residents provides greater economic opportunity for those individuals and provides the Department with a greater ability to sustain the harvest through local communications and enforcement activities. *Virginia commercial harvesters have requested this limitation.*

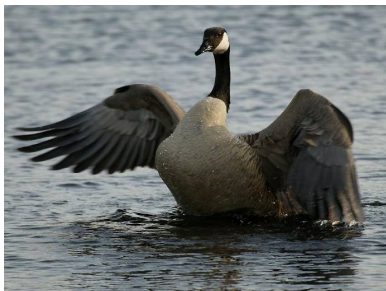
Limiting number of permits, number of traps allowed, permits per address, and net sizes: Limiting the number of permits issued, the number of traps allowable per permit, the number of permits per address and net sizes are all intended to manage the turtle harvest at approximately current annual harvest pressure, which supports sustainability of commercial harvest long-term. Labeling traps and requiring daily checking, such as is required for other commercial harvest activities (eeling, fur trapping) facilitates inspection and coordination by DGIF Law Enforcement Officers and limits the incidental taking of non-target species. Limiting the number of permits per address also promotes participation in the industry. Hoop nets and similar style nets are the most appropriate form of trapping for snapping turtles. The sizes specified relate to traps commercially available.

Duration of season: The proposed closure of commercial turtle harvest from October 1 through May 31 is intended to protect nesting females.

The final staff recommendation is to adopt the amendments as proposed, with a February 1, 2019, effective date, which facilitates timely permitting for the 2019 commercial harvest season.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES

2019-2020 MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



Prepared by Wildlife Resources Division
January 2019

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES

PRELIMINARY FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF PROPOSALS FOR 2019-20
MIGRATORY GAMEBIRD SEASON DATES AND BAG LIMITS

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Doves

Mourning Dove Background Information and Population Status

There are three dove management units (or flyways) across the country, including the Eastern (EMU), Central (CMU) and Western (WMU) Management Units. Virginia is in the EMU.

- Population trends in the EMU based on the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS):
10-yr (2008-2018): stable population trend.
Long term (1966-2018): increasing trend.
- Dove Banding Study – Annual program (since 2003) to leg-band over 500 doves annually in VA, and 33,000 nationwide. Data provides estimates of movements, survival and harvest rates that are used to develop hunting regulations.
- Harvest Strategy: New Harvest Strategy adopted in 2014 allowed an increase from 70 to 90 days of hunting for doves. Daily bag limit remains at 15 birds (up from 12 in 2009).
- Data from HIP (past 3-yr avg.): Hunters = 16,800 Harvest = 246,100

Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days until extended to 90 days in 2014-15)</u>		
2018-2019	Sept. 1 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 14
2017-2018	Sept. 2 – Oct. 29	Nov. 22 – Nov. 29	Dec. 23 – Jan. 15
2016-2017	Sept. 3 – Oct. 30	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2015-2016	Sept. 5 – Nov. 1	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2014-2015	Sept. 1 – Oct. 31	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 15
2013-2014	Sept. 2 – Oct. 14	Oct. 19 – Nov. 2	Dec. 31 – Jan. 11
2012-2013	Sept. 1 – Oct. 13	Oct. 17 – Oct. 27	Dec. 28 – Jan. 12
2011-2012	Sept. 3 – Oct. 10	Oct. 25 – Nov. 5	Dec. 26 - Jan. 14
2010-2011	Sept. 4 – Oct. 11	Oct. 20 – Nov. 6	Dec. 27 – Jan. 8
2009-2010	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 7 – Nov. 7	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
2008-2009	Sept. 1 - 27	Oct. 4 – Oct. 31	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10
2007-2008	Sept. 1 – 29	Oct. 5 – Oct 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 12
2006-2007	Sept. 2 – 23	Oct. 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2005-2006	Sept. 3 – 24	Oct. 8 – Nov. 5	Dec. 27 – Jan. 14
2004-2005	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 9 – Nov. 6	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2003-2004	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 8 – Nov. 8	Dec. 31 – Jan. 10
2002-2003	Sept. 2- 28	Oct. 9 – Nov. 9	Jan. 1 – Jan. 11
2001-2002	Sept. 1 - 29	Oct 13 – Nov. 10	Dec. 29 – Jan. 9
2000-2001	Sept. 2 – 30	Oct 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 30 – Jan. 10
1999-2000	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 2 – Nov. 6	Dec. 25 – Jan. 5
1998-1999	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 3 – Nov. 3	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
1997-1998	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 4 – Nov. 1	Dec. 24 – Jan. 6
1996-1997	Sept. 2 - 28	Oct. 4 - Nov. 2	Dec. 23 - Jan. 4
1995-1996	Sept. 2 - 30	Oct. 2 - Oct. 31	Dec. 23 - Jan. 2

DOVE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2019 - January 31, 2020
Hunting dates may run consecutively or be split into no more than three (3) segments.

SEASON LENGTH: Not more than 90 days.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Daily bag limit can be composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

SHOOTING HOURS: Between ½ hour before sunrise and sunset daily (State may select ½ day shooting in any segment).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 2 - October 27 (56 days)
November 27 - December 4 (8 days)
December 24 - January 18 (26 days)

SHOOTING HOURS: September 2 Noon until sunset
September 3 – October 27 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
November 27 – December 4 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
December 24 - January 18 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

Rails

Background Information and Population Status

- **Harvest** – Comprised predominantly of clapper rails (85%), some sora (14%), and small number of Virginia rails taken. Clappers are mostly local VA birds, some are migrants from NJ, NY, and other salt marsh areas.
- **Nesting** - Clapper rails nest from May through June, with re-nesting in July/August. Late nesting rails have broods that do not reach flight stage until August or September. This occurs in years when 1st nests are flooded by spring storms/tides and re-nests contribute significantly to production. Therefore, we generally wait until the second week of September to open the rail hunting season. The key to setting the season is to bracket the greatest number of high tides possible.
- **Harvest Data** - Avg. No. hunters = 490, Avg. Harvest = 4,300 (HIP, past 10-yr avg.)

Past Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days)</u>	
2018	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2017	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2016	Sept. 10 - Nov. 18	
2015	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2014	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2013	Sept. 7 - 28	Sept. 30 – Nov. 16
2012	Sept. 8 – 29	Oct. 1 – Nov. 17
2011	Sept. 10 – Oct. 1	Oct. 3 – Nov. 19
2010	Sept. 8 – Oct. 2	Oct. 4 – Nov. 17
2009	Sept. 8 – Oct. 3	Oct. 5 – Nov. 17
2008	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2007	Sept. 10 – Nov. 17	
2006	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2005	Sept. 12 – Nov. 19	
2004	Sept. 13 – Nov. 20	
2003	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2002	Sept. 9 - Nov. 16	
2001	Sept. 11 – Nov. 19	
2000	Sept. 13 – Oct. 2	Oct. 11 – Nov. 29
1999	Sept. 10 – Oct. 12	Oct. 22 – Nov. 27
1998	Sept. 9 – Oct. 24	Nov. 2 – Nov. 25
1997	Sept. 15 - 27	Oct. 8 - Dec. 3
1996	Sept. 16 – Oct. 17	Oct. 24 - Nov. 30
1995	Sept. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 21 – Nov.25

RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia)

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2019 - January 26, 2020

SEASON LENGTH: 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: Clapper/King 15 daily, 45 possession
Sora/Virginia 25 daily, 75 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 7 - November 15 (70 days)

BAG LIMIT: Clapper/King: 15 - counted together daily, 45 poss.
Sora/Virginia: 25 - counted together daily, 75 poss.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

NOTES: - This recommendation provides 30 days of 3-ft or greater lunar tides.
- Non-Toxic shot is required for Rail and Snipe hunting in Virginia.

GALLINULE AND MOORHEN

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2019 - January 26, 2020

SEASON LENGTH: 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession (singly or in the aggregate)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 7 – November 15 (70 days).

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession (singly or in the aggregate)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

Woodcock

Background Information and Population Status

- Harvest Strategy revised in 2011, established 3 regulatory options (Liberal, Moderate and Restrictive). Annual regulation based on the 3-year mean of the singing ground survey index. For 2019-20, Harvest Strategy calls for Moderate Regulation (45 days/3 birds).
- Singing-ground survey (SGS) in Eastern Management Region:
 - 1 year trend (2017-2018): stable
 - 10 year trend (2009-2018): 1.41% decline per year.
 - Long-term (1966-2018): 1.18 % decline per year.
- The 2017 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.34 jv/ad female) was 5.6% below the 2017 index and 17.3% below than the long-term index.
- Research suggests that hunting has little effect on population trend, but habitat is limiting.
- Virginia is cooperating in a Flyway-wide study of woodcock movements, migrations and habitat use. From 2018-2020, GPS transmitters will be attached to birds to follow their movements.
- In Virginia, season split into two segments to provide some opportunity for early hunting in western areas, and later hunting in central and eastern areas.
Avg. No. hunters = 1,430 Avg. Harvest = 2,337 (HIP, past 10-year avg.)

Recent Seasons (bag limit has been 3 birds)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>		<u>Days</u>
2018-2019	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 8 – Jan. 14	45
2017-2018	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2016-2017	Oct. 29 – Nov. 4	Dec. 9 – Jan. 15	45
2015-2016	Nov. 23 – Dec. 5	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2014-2015	Nov. 24 – Dec. 6	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2013-2014	Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	Dec. 5 – Jan. 11	45
2012-2013	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 6 – Jan. 12	45
2011-2012	Oct. 29 – Nov. 12	Dec. 16 – Jan. 14	45
2010-2011	Oct. 30 - Nov. 13	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10	30
2009-2010	Nov. 7 – 21	Dec. 26 – Jan. 9	30
2008-2009	Nov. 8 – 22	Dec. 20 – Jan 3	30
2007-2008	Oct. 27 – Nov. 10	Dec. 22 – Jan. 5	30
2006-2007	Nov. 4 – 18	Dec. 23 – Jan. 6	30
2005-2006	Nov. 12 – 26	Dec.17 – Dec 31	30
2004-2005	Oct. 30 – Nov. 13	Dec.18 – Jan. 1	30
2003-2004	Nov. 1 – 15	Dec. 20 – Jan. 3	30
2002-2003	Nov. 2 – 16	Dec. 21 - Jan. 4	30
2001-2002	Nov. 3 - 17	Dec. 22 - Jan. 5	30
2000-2001	Nov. 4 - 18	Dec. 23 - Jan. 6	30
1999-2000	Oct. 30 - Nov. 13	Dec. 18 - Jan. 1	30
1998-1999	Oct. 31 - Nov. 14	Dec. 19 - Jan. 2	30
1997-1998	Nov. 1 - Nov. 15	Dec. 20 - Jan. 3	30
1996-1997	Oct. 28 - Nov. 23	Dec. 18 - Jan. 4	45
1995-1996	Oct. 30 - Nov. 25	Dec. 20 - Jan. 6	45

WOODCOCK

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: October 1, 2019 - January 31, 2020

SEASON LENGTH: 45 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: November 20 – December 8 (19 days)
December 21 – January 15 (26 days)

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

Snipe

Background Information

- Season generally set to overlap duck season. There are relatively few snipe hunters in VA and most snipe are taken opportunistically by other migratory bird hunters.
- Harvest Data (HIP, past 10-yr avg.): No. hunters = 470, Harvest = 810

Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 107 days)</u>	
2018-2019	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2017-2018	Oct. 6 – Oct. 9	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2016-2017	Oct. 7 – Oct. 10	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2015-2016	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2014-2015	Oct. 10 – Oct. 13	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2013-2014	Oct. 10 – Oct. 14	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2012-2013	Oct. 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2011-2012	Oct. 6 – Oct. 10	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2010-2011	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2009-2010	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 30
2008-2009	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13	Oct. 22 – Jan.31
2007-2008	Oct 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2006-2007	Oct 4 – Oct. 9	Oct. 23 – Jan. 31
2005-2006	Oct 5 – Oct.10	Oct. 24 – Jan. 31
2004-2005	Oct 7 – Oct 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2003-2004	Oct. 8 – Oct 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2002-2003	Oct 9 – Oct 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2001-2002	Oct. 10 - Oct. 13	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2000-2001	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1999-2000	Oct. 6 - Oct. 9	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1998-1999	Oct. 7 - Oct. 10	Oct. 20 - Jan. 30
1997-1998	Oct. 8 - Oct. 11	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1996-1997	Oct. 9 - Oct. 12	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1995-1996	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31

SNIFE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2019 - January 31, 2020

SEASON LENGTH: 107 days, straight or 2 segments

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: October 11 - October 14 (4 days)
October 21 - January 31 (103 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET - 2019

- Special teal seasons were initiated in late 1960's to provide harvest opportunities on blue-winged and green-winged teal. When the blue-winged teal breeding population (BPOP) is above 3.3 million, a 9-day season can be offered. If the BPOP exceeds 4.7 million, a 16-day season can be offered.
- Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest migrants. Many pass through Virginia from late August through October, prior to the opening of the late duck season.
- Green-winged teal are also early migrants and arrive in September and October. However, some Green-wings remain through the winter depending on weather conditions.
- Virginia has held a special September teal season since 1999 (see dates listed below). The season was initially held only in the area east of I-95 because there are greater numbers of teal and teal hunters in the coastal plain. Even in the coastal plain, teal are not widespread, and the harvest has been relatively small. The season was expanded in 2011 to provide some teal hunting opportunity in the area west of I-95.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>
	<u>East of I-95</u>	<u>West of I-95</u>
2018	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2017	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2016	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2015	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2014	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 22 - 30
2013	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 23 - 30
2012	Sept. 17 – 29	Sept. 24 - 29
2011	Sept. 19 – 30	Sept. 26 - 30
2010	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2009	Sept. 21 – 30	na
2008	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2007	Sept. 17 – 26	na
2006	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2005	Sept. 16 – 24	na
2004	Sept. 16 – 25	na
2003	Sept. 13 – 23	na
2002	Sept. 14 – 24	na
2001	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2000	Sept. 14 – 23	na
1999	Sept. 16 – 25	na

Average Annual Harvest: 669 teal

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 30, 2018

SEASON LENGTH: Up to 16 days

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 17 – September 30 (14 days)
HUNT AREA: East of I – 95

September 21 – September 30 (10 days)
HUNT AREA: West of I – 95

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only).

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

FACT SHEET - Waterfowl Hunters and Harvests - 2019

- Liberal duck seasons (60 days, 6 bird bag limit) and resident goose seasons have resulted in high waterfowl harvests in Virginia during the past ten years. Harvest has averaged ~134,260 ducks and ~57,500 Canada geese from 2013-2017, compared to 114,770 ducks and 25,000 geese during the 1990's. The long season length and liberal bags offer greater opportunity and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season.
- Waterfowl hunter numbers in Virginia have been generally stable since the late 1990's. Since 1999, the Harvest Information Program (HIP) has been used to estimate hunter effort and harvest. The average number of duck and goose hunters over the past 3 years, as measured by HIP, was 15,700 and 13,666 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2017-2018 season were relatively favorable for waterfowl hunting although extreme cold temperatures during the beginning of January pushed many wintering waterfowl farther south. This resulted in a higher duck harvest than the previous year and above the 5-year average. Estimated Canada goose harvest on the other hand was lower than the previous year and but still slightly above the five year average.
- The total estimated duck harvest during the 2017-2018 season in Virginia (145,200) was 15% higher than the previous year (126,000) and 8% above the past 5-year average (134,260).
- During the 2017-2018 season mallards were the most commonly harvested duck in Virginia, followed by wood ducks, bufflehead, gadwall and black duck, which compromised the top 5 harvested species. The mallard harvest in Virginia in 2017-2018 (43,200) increased by 10% from 2016-2017, and was 11% higher than the past 5-year average (38,840).
- The Canada goose harvest in Virginia in 2017-2018 (60,000) was less than the previous season (84,400) and 4% higher than the past 5-year average (57,500).

FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2019

Mid-Continent Areas: Annual precipitation is the most important factor influencing the quantity and quality of nesting and brood rearing habitat for prairie-nesting birds. The number of ponds counted during the USFWS May breeding waterfowl survey is used as an index for assessing waterfowl nesting habitat. In 2018, the May pond count (5.2 million) was 14% below last year's count (6.1 million), but similar to the long-term average (5.2 million).

The total duck breeding population (BPOP) estimate for the mid-continent area was 41.2 million ducks in 2018, 14% below the 2017 estimate of 47.3 million, yet 17% higher than the long-term average (1955-2017). The Breeding population estimates (BPOP), along with the percent change from last year and the long-term average, are presented below for the 10 most common species.

Species	2018 BPOP	% Change from 2017	% Change from Long-Term Avg.
Mallard	9.3 million	-12%	+17%
Blue-winged Teal	6.5 million	-18%	+27%
Green-winged Teal	3.0 million	-16%	+42%
Gadwall	2.9 million	-31%	+43%
Northern Shoveler	4.2 million	-3%	+62%
Northern Pintail	2.4 million	-18%	-40%
American Wigeon	2.8 million	+2%	+8%
Redhead	1.0 million	-10%	+38%
Scaup	4.0 million	-9%	-20%
Canvasback	686,000	-6%	+16%
Total Ducks	41.2 million	-13%	+17%

Eastern Breeding Areas: Conditions in much of the eastern survey area declined or remained similar relative to 2017. The region experienced mainly average precipitation since September 2017 and variable fall and winter temperatures. The entire region had well-below-average temperatures in April 2018 that continued into May in more northerly areas. Spring phenology and ice-out were generally normal to much later than normal, the latter mainly in northern Quebec and Labrador. Conditions for waterfowl production generally declined to fair or good with northern areas affected by a late thaw and localized flooding farther south.

- Breeding population estimates for the 6 most common species surveyed were generally similar to or lower than last year except for Ring-necked ducks (2% above 2017). Mallards (1.1 million), Black ducks (712,000), Goldeneyes (486,000) and Green-winged teal (346,000) were slightly down from 2017 and their long term averages.

Virginia: Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2018 started off rather poor with dry conditions, but significant precipitation later in the spring filled many wetlands and provided good nesting habitat. Local duck and goose production is expected to be slightly below average.

The breeding pair estimate for Mallards (7,913) decreased significantly from the previous year's estimate (19,131). Wood duck breeding pair estimates (14,237) was similar to the 2017 estimate (15,167). Canada goose breeding pair estimates (53,447) were 32% higher than the previous year's estimate.

YOUTH WATERFOWL DAY

Guidelines for the proposed Youth Days include:

1. States may select 2 days per duck-hunting zone, designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days," in addition to their regular duck seasons.
2. The 2 days (no longer required to be consecutive) must be held outside of any regular duck season on a weekend, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate.
3. The days could be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season.
4. The daily bag limit is the same as that allowed in the regular season and includes ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, gallinules, 1 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the youth possesses a tundra swan permit). Flyway species restrictions remain in effect.
5. Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. Youth 12 years of age and older will need a valid Virginia state hunting license.
6. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany the youth hunter into the field. This adult may not duck hunt, but may participate in other open seasons

DUCKS

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Outside Dates: September 21, 2019 - January 31, 2020

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth Waterfowl Hunt Days, (can be non-consecutive).

Bag Limit: Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks of any species except for the following restrictions: can include no more than **2 mallards (only 1 hen)**, 4 scoters, 4 long-tailed ducks, 4 eiders, 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasback, 2 scaup, 2 redheads, **1 pintail**, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck. Closed season on harlequin duck. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

NOTE: There is an option to include mergansers in the general duck bag or leave them as a separate bag (see Merganser framework page 10). If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

Split Season Options: 3-way split season, no zones

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day

Season Dates: October 11 - 14 (Black Duck closed) (4 days)
November 20 – December 1 (12 days)
December 19 – January 31 (Friday) (44 days)
(60 days)

October 26, February 8 – Youth Waterfowl Days

Bag Limit: Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks of any species except for the following restrictions: can include **no more than 2 mallards (only 1 hen)**, 4 scoters, 4 long-tailed ducks, 4 eiders, 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 11 – 14), 2 canvasback, 2 scaup, 2 redheads, **1 pintail**, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck,. Closed season on harlequin duck. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

MERGANSER AND COOT

MERGANSER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Option A

Season Length: 60 hunting days
Outside Date: September 21, 2019 - January 31, 2020
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily, of which only 2 birds may be a hooded merganser (15 in possession, only 6 of which may be hooded mergansers)

Option B

To be included into the general duck bag. If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Option A

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily, of which only 2 birds may be a hooded merganser (15 in possession, only 6 of which may be hooded mergansers)

AMERICAN COOT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 60 hunting days
Outside Date: September 21, 2019 - January 31, 2020
Bag Limit: 15 birds daily (45 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season.
Bag Limit: 15 daily (45 in possession)

SPECIAL SEA DUCK SEASON IN SEA DUCK ZONE*

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

SEA DUCKS (SCOTER, LONG-TAILED DUCK, AND EIDER)

<u>Season Length:</u>	60 hunting days, run consecutively
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 15, 2019 - January 31, 2020
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds per day (15 in possession), may include no more than 4 scoters, 4 eiders or 4 long-tailed ducks.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEA DUCKS (SCOTER, LONG-TAILED DUCK, AND EIDER)

<u>Season Dates:</u>	November 9 – January 7 (60 days) In the Sea Duck Zone delineated below
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds per day (15 in possession), may include no more than 4 scoters, 4 eiders or 4 long-tailed ducks.

*** Sea Duck Zone:** Those waters at a distance greater than 800 yards from any shore, island or emergent vegetation in the following area: the ocean waters of Virginia, the tidal waters of Northampton and Accomack Counties, and the Chesapeake Bay and each of its tributaries up to the first highway bridge. Back Bay and its tributaries are not included in the Sea Duck Zone.

Note - Sea ducks cannot be taken in the Sea Duck Zone after January 7. Sea ducks can, however, be taken during the regular duck season (Oct. 11-14, Nov. 20-Dec. 1 and Dec. 19-Jan. 31) in all other areas outside of the sea duck zone (i.e.: within 800 yards of any shore, island or emergent vegetation...), since they are included in the regular season duck bag. No more than 4 scoters, 4 eiders or 4 long-tails can be included in the regular season daily limit of 6 ducks.

FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2019

- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 264,000 geese in the late 1990's. This population caused significant conflicts with human and wildlife populations, and management actions were taken to reduce their numbers. The current population estimate is 141,693 (+/- 30,000) in Virginia and near 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons were initiated in 1993 to help manage this population and to provide recreational opportunities for hunters. These seasons occur prior to the arrival of most migrant geese (~Sept. 25 in Virginia), or in areas where there are fewer migrant geese. The Federal Framework allows Virginia to conduct a statewide September Resident Goose season from September 1-25.
- There are fewer migrant geese in the western portions of Virginia, and special “Goose Hunting Zones” have been established that allow more liberal seasons in areas with more resident Canada goose.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons have been very popular, and have increased hunter participation and resident goose harvests. These seasons have been very effective in managing resident goose populations and helping to meet statewide population objectives.
- In areas where hunting is not feasible, other options including Depredation Orders (Airport, Agricultural, and Nest and Egg Depredation Orders) have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

Year	Population Estimate *	September Harvest
2018	132,633 +/- 24%	na
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	5,500
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	na
2015	150,651 +/- 22%	6,100
2014	130,503 +/- 26%	7,500
2013	144,910 +/- 26%	10,700
2012	158,267 +/- 28%	9,700
2011	165,022 +/- 28%	14,700
2010	147,313 +/- 29%	15,600
2009	145,019 +/- 29%	16,800
2008	157,560 +/- 29%	17,500
2007	154,030 +/- 27%	13,600
2006	136,700 +/- 27%	11,100
2005	129,486 +/- 26%	10,100
2004	143,741 +/- 25%	17,000
2003	186,753 +/- 23%	14,800
2002	218,719 +/- 24%	14,300
2001	218,384 +/- 27%	11,800
2000	227,164 +/- 32%	10,800
1999	261,554 +/- 34%	11,400
1998	264,867 +/- 35%	12,200
1997	249,612 +/- 34%	10,500
1996	181,813 +/- 36%	10,000
1995	151,043 +/- 39%	5,500

*3-year running average

SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 25, 2019

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (except as provided for in special hunting options *)

* SPECIAL HUNTING OPTIONS: Allows the use of electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours (1/2 hr after sunset) when no other waterfowl seasons are open.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 1 – September 25 (25 days)

BAG LIMIT: 10 daily, 30 in possession

HUNT AREA: Statewide

SHOOTING HOURS:

East of I-95

September 1 – 16: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 17 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

West of I-95

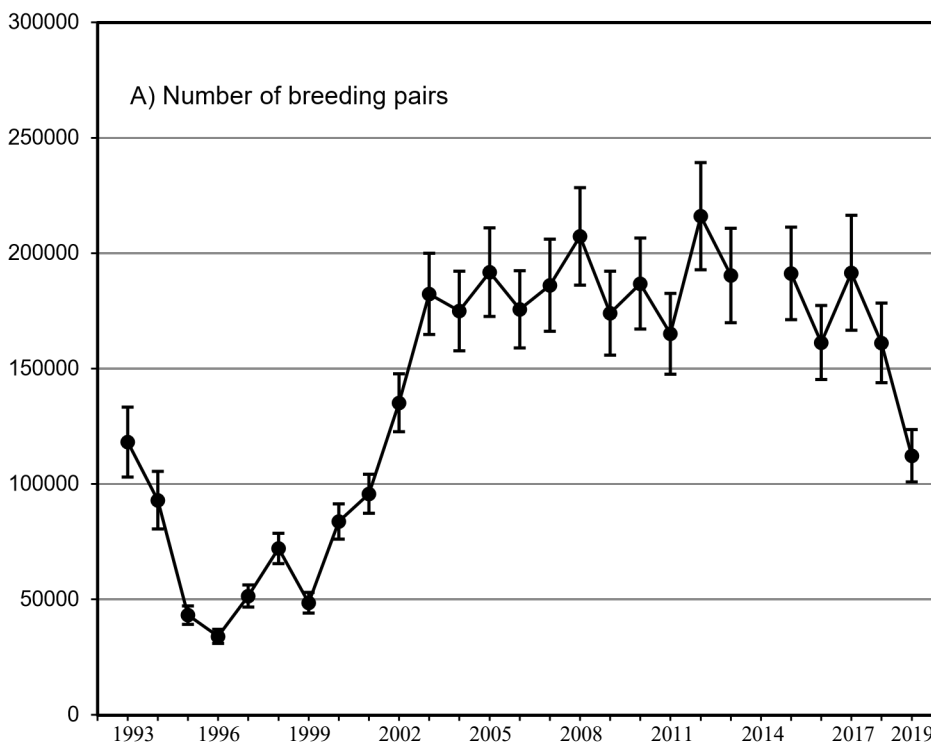
September 1 – 20: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 21 - 25: ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

NOTE: Staff is not recommending the options of using electronic calls or unplugged shotguns for hunting geese in the September season.

FACT SHEET- The Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2019

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000.
- As the population increased, hunting regulations were liberalized. The season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days in 2012. The bag limit was increased to 2 per day in 2004 and has remain at 50 days with a 2 goose daily limit since then.
- However, annual productivity has been below average for 5 of the past 6 years, and adverse weather conditions on the nesting grounds in Canada resulted in very poor production in 2018. The breeding population has declined over the past several years (see graph below) and dropped again in 2018 to 112,000 breeding pairs.



- Due to the “bust” in production this year and the declining population trend, the Atlantic Flyway Council recommended reducing the hunting season on AP geese for the 2019-20 season. The season in our AP Goose zone in Virginia will be restricted to 30 days with a 1-geese daily limit. Canada goose seasons in the other two goose zones in Virginia (Southern James Bay (SJB) and Resident Zones) will be unchanged from last year.

Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones

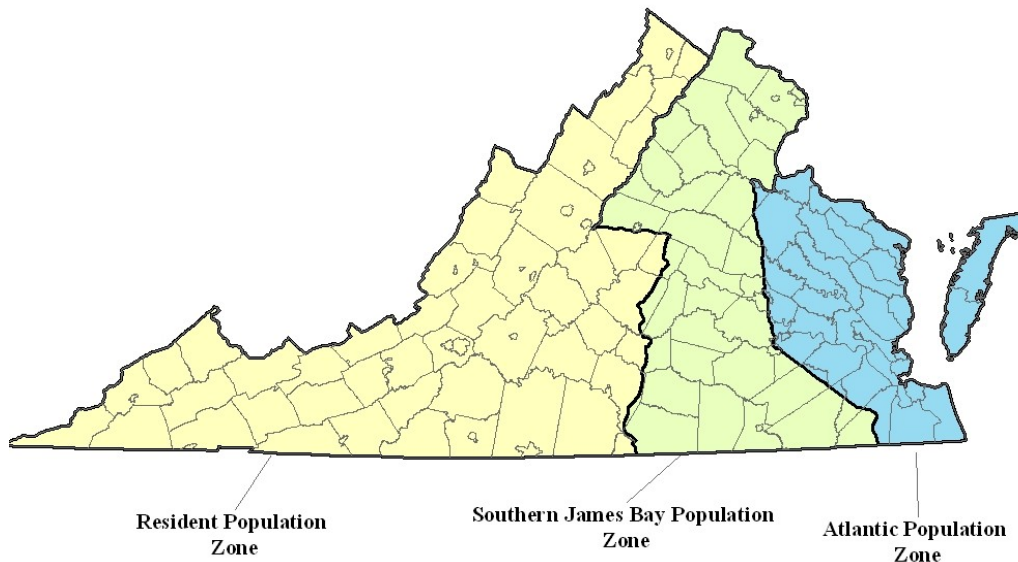
- There are 4 subpopulations of Canada geese in Virginia. These include the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population (RP) along with three migrant goose populations, the North Atlantic Population (NAP), the Southern James Bay Population (SJB), and the Atlantic Population (AP). The majority of our migrant geese (~82%) are from the AP, about 18% are from the SJB, and <1% are from the NAP.
- Recent research and banding analyses have enabled us to better delineate the distribution and migration corridors used by these different subpopulations, and to establish separate hunting zones based on the percentage of migrant geese in each zone. These zones include the:

Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone – The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Southern James Bay Population (SJB) Hunt Zone – The area to the west of the AP Hunt Zone boundary and east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County line) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Route 15, then south along Rt. 15 to the North Carolina line.

Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone – The portion of the state west of the SJB Hunt Zone.

Virginia's Canada Goose Hunt Zones



CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):

<u>Season Length:</u>	30 hunting days
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	November 15 – February 5
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

SOUTHERN JAMES BAY POPULATION ZONE (SJBP)

<u>Outside Dates and Season Length:</u>	
<u>Regular Season:</u>	November 15 – January 14 (up to 40 hunting days)
<u>Extended Season:</u>	January 15 – February 15
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	3/day (9 in possession) through January 14 5/day (15 in possession), January 15 to February 15

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):

<u>Outside Dates:</u>	November 15 – March 10
<u>Season Length:</u>	80 hunting days
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds daily (15 in possession)

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)

<u>Season Dates:</u>	December 21 – December 29 (9 days)
	January 11 – January 31 (21 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	1 goose per day (3 in possession)
<u>Shooting Hours:</u>	1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

SOUTHERN JAMES BAY POPULATION ZONE (SJBP)

<u>Season Dates:</u>	
<u>Regular Season:</u>	November 20 – December 1 3/day (12 days)
	December 19 – January 14 3/day (27 days)
<u>Extended Season:</u>	January 15 - February 15 5/day (32 days)
<u>Shooting Hours:</u>	1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)

<u>Season Dates:</u>	November 20 – December 1 (12 days)
	December 19 - February 24 (68 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds daily (15 in possession)
<u>Shooting Hours:</u>	1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

FACT SHEET - Status of Light Geese (Greater and Lesser Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese) - 2019

- The majority of the “Light” geese found in the Atlantic Flyway are Greater Snow Geese, while less than 5% are Lesser Snow Geese, with even smaller numbers of Ross’s Geese.
- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2018 population estimate was 877,000 geese (+/- 11%), which is 17% higher than last year but similar to the long-term average.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- Breeding conditions were below average on Bylot Island in 2018. Nesting phenology was delayed due to thick winter snow pack and cool weather in June, and predation levels were high during egg laying due to decreased lemming abundance. Nest initiation date (14 June) and first hatching date (11 July) were later than long-term averages (12 June and 9 July, respectively; 1998–2018).
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations have increased almost ten-fold. A shift from feeding almost exclusively in marshes to feeding more on agricultural grains has allowed them to expand their range and habitat use. This shift has also allowed them to return to their breeding habitats in better physical condition, which has led to increased productivity.
- This population boom has resulted in ecological degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas. It has also led to conflicts with agricultural interest. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation.
- Current hunting regulations for snow geese are as liberal as Federal Frameworks will allow and include a 107-day season that runs from October to January, and a bag limit that was increased from 15 to 25 in 2010. Liberal seasons have helped increase the harvest, however, the population is still quite large and concerns remain about detrimental impacts these birds are having on breeding and wintering habitats.
- A Conservation Order (CO) was established in 2009, and authorizes the use of alternative management strategies (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, shooting to ½ hour after sunset, no daily bag limit) to further increase the harvest of snow geese in the Atlantic Flyway. The number of hunters participating in this season in Virginia has averaged 292 per year and the harvest has averaged 652 snow geese per year.

LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	107 hunting days
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	October 1, 2019 - March 10, 2020
<u>Split Season Option:</u>	3-way split season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	October 17 – January 31	(107 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)	

LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Outside Dates:</u>	When no other waterfowl seasons are open
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	No daily or possession limit
<u>Special Hunting Methods:</u>	Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset only in areas and at times when other waterfowl seasons are closed.
<u>Special Requirements:</u>	States participating in the Conservation Order are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Conservation Order Zone: The same as the AP Canada Goose Zone - The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

<u>Season Dates:</u>	February 1 – April 5, 2020	(65 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	No daily or possession limit	
<u>Special Hunting Methods:</u>	Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset.	
<u>Special Requirements:</u>	Hunters participating in the Conservation Order <u>must register</u> , keep a record of their harvest and participation, and return a harvest report form within two weeks following the close of the season.	

FACT SHEET - Status of Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swan - 2019

- **BRANT.** The main breeding areas for Atlantic Brant are in the Eastern Canadian Arctic on Baffin, Southampton, and Ellesmere Islands. Most brant winter along the Atlantic Coast from MA to NC.
- The 2017-18 Mid-Winter Survey count of brant in the Atlantic Flyway (169,700) was 5% higher than the 2017 estimate and 25% higher than the past 5-year average (135,344). There were 9,330 counted in Virginia, a slight decrease from 2017 (9,805). The juvenile recruitment index in 2017 (18%) was higher than in 2016, but still 27% lower than the long-term average.
- However, breeding conditions were below average across most of the eastern Arctic in the summer of 2018, and brant production was the lowest recorded in the past 25 years.
- The brant hunting season framework for 2019-20 will be based on the 2019 mid-winter count, which is being conducted in January and February 2019 by the coastal states in the Atlantic Flyway.
- **TUNDRA SWANS.** The Eastern Population of tundra swans nest in arctic tundra areas from Alaska, east to Hudson Bay and Baffin Island. These birds winter in coastal areas from Maryland to North Carolina.
- There were 111,600 eastern population tundra swans counted on the 2017-18 Mid-Winter Survey, which was 6% lower than the 2016-17 count (119,300), but above the long term-average.
- Similar to other arctic nesting species (AP Canada Geese and Atlantic Brant), productivity for Tundra swans in 2018 was well below average in 2018.
- Prior to this year, eight states in the U.S. hunted tundra swans including Alaska, Utah, Montana and Nevada in the Pacific Flyway, North Dakota and South Dakota in the Central Flyway, and North Carolina and Virginia in the Atlantic Flyway.
- In 2019-20, Delaware will initiate it's first tundra swan hunting season.
- Starting in 2019-20, the allocation of hunt permits in the Atlantic Flyway will be split between the 3 states that will have tundra swan hunting seasons (DE, VA, NC), in proportion to the number of swans in each state. North Carolina will be allocated 6,115 permits, Virginia will be allocated 801 permits, and Delaware will be allocated 84 permits.
- The tundra swan hunting season in Virginia is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ATLANTIC BRANT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK - (PRELIMINARY)*

<u>Season Length:</u>	60 hunting days*
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 21, 2019 - January 31, 2020
<u>Split Season Option:</u>	2-way split season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	2 bird daily (6 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	November 20 - December 1 December 19 - January 31 (Preliminary – pending Federal Regulations)*
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	2 birds daily (6 in possession)

TUNDRA SWAN

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 90 hunting days

Outside Dates: October 1, 2019 - January 31, 2020

Virginia may issue up to **801 permits** and must obtain harvest and hunter participation data. Each permittee is authorized to take one (1) tundra swan per season.

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: November 20 - January 31

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

Hunt Area: All counties and portions of counties east of U.S. Route I- 95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base.

NOTE: VDGIF will issue no more than 801 swan-hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2019-2020 tundra swan-hunting permit issued by VDGIF shall be authorized to hunt tundra swans. Each permittee will be authorized to take one tundra swan during the season. Swan hunting permits are non-transferable and are valid for use only by the person to whom issued. Permits must be in the immediate possession of the permittee while swan hunting. Immediately at the time and place of kill, successful hunters must permanently record the month and day of kill on their permit and attach it to their swan. The VDGIF is required to obtain hunter participation and harvest information to offer this Tundra Swan hunting season. **Hunters are required to complete the tundra swan hunt questionnaire (survey) and submit their results to the Department by February 15, 2020.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

FALCONRY

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	No more than 107 on any species (Gun and Falconry combined)
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 1 - March 10
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	3 daily (9 in possession)
<u>Hawking Hours:</u>	½ hour before sunrise until sunset.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Dove:</u>	September 2 – October 27 November 27 – December 4 December 24 – January 31
<u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u>	September 7 – December 22
<u>Woodcock:</u>	October 17 – January 31
<u>Snipe:</u>	October 11 - 14 October 21 – January 31
<u>Canada Goose:</u>	September 1 - September 25 November 20 – December 1 December 19 - February 24
<u>September Teal:</u>	September 17 - September 30
<u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u>	October 11- 14 November 20 – February 14
<u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u>	October 17 – January 31

NOTE: Recommended dates based on adoption of preceding gun season proposals; if amended, staff requests permission to calculate permissible dates for each species within the allowable federal framework.

2019-2020 TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE REGULATION REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

Public Scoping Period – Summarization of Public Feedback

January 2019

Introduction

The Department’s 2019-2020 Terrestrial Wildlife Regulation Review and Amendment Process began with a 60-day public scoping period from October 15 – December 14, 2018. During that time, the Department received 1,099 public comment forms (1,061 online submission, 38 handwritten submissions) regarding public desires for regulation amendments. The number of comment forms received during the public scoping period phase of the current terrestrial wildlife regulation review and amendment process more than doubled the number received during each of the previous three wildlife regulation review and amendment processes.

Regulation Process	<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>	<u>2017-2018</u>	<u>2019-2020</u>
# of Comments	510	487	434	1,099

Constituents were given a list of species and asked to indicate the species for which they desired a regulation change, what specific regulation change they desired, and how that change might impact wildlife populations and the recreational pursuits of others. Online comment forms were compiled in a database and handwritten comment forms were electronically scanned. All forms were forwarded to the appropriate Wildlife Resources Division species regulation committee for review during the current regulation review and amendment cycle. These public comments along with the Department’s biological data and administrative capabilities will be evaluated and considered by the committees between mid-January and late February, and staff recommendations for regulation amendments based upon this information will be presented at the March Board meetings.

Outreach efforts used to encourage public input

1. Throughout the 60-day comment period, a link to the online scoping period comment form was featured in the “New and Popular” section of the Department’s homepage.
2. An article on the regulation scoping period and a link to the online comment form were included in the “Hunting” version of the Department’s *Notes from the Field* newsletter. The “Hunting” version of *Notes from the Field* is emailed to 112,867 hunters.
3. Constituents who have previously indicated they wanted to receive notification when the Department was seeking public input received an email regarding the public scoping period. This email was sent to 693 individuals.
4. These outreach efforts generated 8,453 visits to the online comment form for the scoping period.

Deer (916 comments)

Deer project staff identified 682 individuals who made 916 total comments. The ten most frequent categories of comments appear in the table below. These top ten categories accounted for 88% of the deer comments. While 533 (58%) of the comments were identified as being statewide in nature, 519 (57%) referenced a specific county or group of counties. We received deer comments from 82 of 97 (85%) deer management units (counties/cities).

Category	Count	%
Hunting with dogs	159	17
Either-sex deer hunting days	151	16
Bag limits	139	15
Antler point restrictions	82	9
Firearms season	72	8
Sunday hunting	68	7
Muzzleloader season	51	6
Archery season	32	3
Earn A Buck	27	3
Feeding and baiting	22	2
		88

Comments related to hunting deer with dogs ranged from requests for additional opportunities for dog hunters (e.g., youth day for dog hunting, deer dog training season) to suggestions for shortening the time period when dogs may be used to hunt deer, requiring minimum acreages, and eliminating the right-to-retrieve law. Among comments related to either-sex deer hunting days, most were suggestions for increasing the number of either-sex days in many areas of the state. Bag limit comments were diverse, but a theme to reduce the antlered buck bag limit was evident. Although not a regulatory issue, the request to allow hunting on Sundays on public lands was among the most frequent single comments received.

Bear (300 comments)

Content of Bear Related Comments (% of comments)

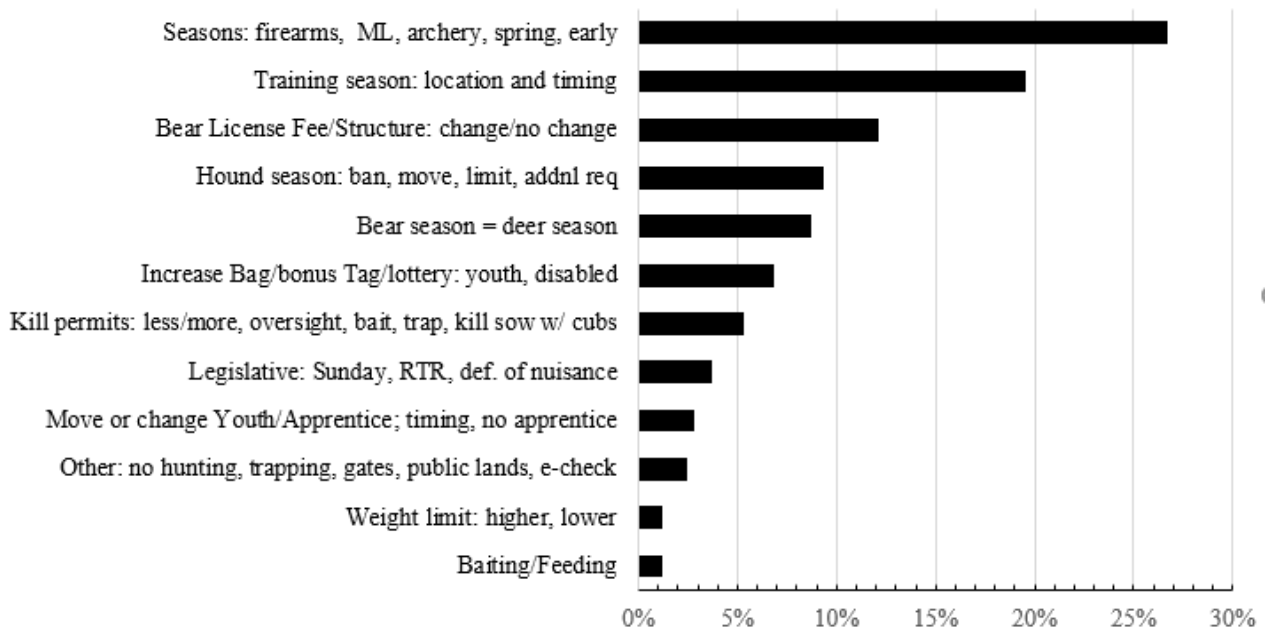


Figure. Percent of comments referencing categorized black bear regulation topics.

The majority of comments (26%) referenced increasing hunting opportunities in various areas of the state including expanding existing seasons (firearms, muzzleloader, archery, early) as well as adding new

season timeframes (spring). Most commenters referenced excessive bear populations, and many deer hunters expressed the idea that more bear season resulting in fewer bears would lead to an increase in deer populations. The second most referenced issue (20% of comments) focused on the bear hound training season, particularly the addition of more time (winter, spring summer, year-round) as well as including more areas to train. Desire for additional training centered on more time to teach dogs to hunt, better weather, more recreation and helping to alleviate bear conflict issues. Categorized separately from the bear hound training season, 9% of comments addressed the use of hounds for bear hunting in general. Most expressed the desire to limit or stop hound hunting, move the hound seasons or require additional conditions for hunters using hounds (special permit).

About 12% of comments related to the bear license. Some comments conveyed support for the license structure while the majority expressed a desire to “go back to the way it used to be”, make fees cheaper or add an additional benefit to the bear license. Most comments referenced the perception that “no one” has bought the new license, resulting in an overpopulation of bears. A few of the comments (9%) referenced the inconvenience of having separate seasons for bears and deer and wanted the two species seasons to mirror each other. Several comments (7%) suggested techniques to increase the bear harvest if necessary (increase bag limits, use bonus tags, lottery system) and giving special permissions to certain groups (youth, disabled).

Comments regarding kill or out of season permits (5%) were diverse. Issues ranged from the desire for less permits to be issued with more oversight needed on issued permits, to the desire by farmers to be able to bait and trap bears on farms as well as wanting a mechanism to kill more females with family groups. About 4% of comments centered on legislative issues in the Code of Virginia which included the desire for more Sunday hunting opportunity, repealing the Right to Retrieve law and changing the definition of bears to “nuisance species” so that they may be shot at any time. The remaining comments mentioned changing youth/apprentice days in some way (timing, don’t allow apprentice), opening more gates, electronic checking, changing the weight limit (increase, decrease), a desire to bait and feed bears, a trapping season and requests for bear hunting to be stopped all together.

Wild Turkey (44 comments)/Grouse (6 comments)

Separating the first two-weeks of the fall turkey season from the muzzleloader deer season was the most prevalent issue related to turkey hunting in the fall. Because of the differing blaze color hunting requirements between fall turkey hunters (no blaze color required or typically worn) and muzzleloader deer hunters (blaze color required while moving to/from stand), individuals felt the over-lapping seasons essentially required hunters to choose one species over the other; additionally, fall turkey hunters using dogs typically avoid hunting with their dogs during a firearms deer season. Several comments were received regarding extending the fall season in Northern Neck counties and providing more turkey hunting opportunity during Thanksgiving week. Prohibiting the use of rifles was the most common suggestion for spring turkey hunting. Other spring season comments included opening the season earlier and allowing all-day hunting the entire season. Most of the grouse regulation comments recommended closing or reducing the length of the grouse season with a couple individuals suggesting we reduce the grouse bag limit. Extending the grouse season so it closed at the same time as adjoining states was also recommended.

Elk (11 comments)

While 11 comments specifically focused on elk, another 8 comments referenced elk in some capacity. Values underlying the comments ranged from concerns related to property and agricultural damage to harvest opportunities and economic benefits of elk may bring to local communities. Most of the

comments were directly related to harvest regulations with several individuals stating a desire to continue the harvest of elk on deer tags while others sought increased opportunity and longer seasons for deer and elk to alleviate damage concerns. Some individuals expressed interest in seeking additional support for elk in Dickenson Co. either through increased habitat or increased tourist opportunities. Support for elk restoration was mixed with some individuals supporting these efforts while others stated they did not want elk in Virginia. The need for, or desire for, the creation of an elk specific hunting tag was mentioned by a few individuals. Other topics referenced within the elk comments included being able to feed deer within the elk management zone (EMZ) and concerns about elk spreading disease outside of the EMZ.

Small Game (13 comments)

Comments related to small game species were very diverse. Comments regarding the quail season ranged from reducing the season length due to the decline of quail numbers to extending the season until the end of February. Developing additional opportunities to hunt squirrels was the focus of suggestions to extend the season through March, increase the bag limit, and allow squirrels to be taken during the spring turkey season. Rabbit hunting comments included reducing the season to prevent the late season harvest of female rabbits, extending the season through March, and allowing hunters to carry a pistol while training dogs on rabbits to protect the pups from coyotes. A common reason for wanting to extend small game beyond their current closing dates was to provide opportunity to pursue small game without competition from deer hunters which respondents indicated was an issue during November and December. In addition to the online comments, throughout the past year Department Small Game staffs have received comments from hunters seeking more opportunity to train bird dogs on Wildlife Management Areas and the National Forest.

Furbearers/Trapping (31 comments)

Several hunters requested additional opportunities to hunt or chase bobcats with dogs. We also received several suggestions related to the timing of the raccoon chase season. A few hunters expressed concerns that the continuous open season for chasing coyotes with dogs, as well as permits issued for foxhound field trials, were enabling deer hunters to illegally chase deer outside of the season. Other hunting related issues included being able to use shot larger than #2 fine to hunt coyotes during the spring turkey season and prohibiting the use of electronic calls for hunting gray foxes. Suggested modifications to the trapping regulations involved opening several northern Virginia counties to fox trapping and closing trapping on Briery Creek WMA. Individuals commenting on legal trap types requested allowance for 2-piece locks and 350-pound break-away devices on snares set above 12". Comments focused on trapping near an exposed carcass involved reducing the minimum distance that a trap may legally be set near the carcass from 50' to 30' and allowing additional types of traps to be set near carcasses. We also received comments related to Sunday hunting of furbearers on WMAs and changes in local firearms ordinances. A few individuals also expressed their opposition to trapping in general.

Waterfowl/Waterfowl Blinds (13 comments)

Public feedback on migratory game bird topics ranged from comments on waterfowl population issues to waterfowl blind laws. Several individuals sought additional opportunities to harvest resident Canada geese to address agricultural damage concerns. Some commenters voiced opposition to the proposed reduction in the mallard bag limit for the 2019-2020 waterfowl season. For the Atlantic Population of Canada geese, suggestions ranged from closing the season in light of the proposed season reduction for 2019-2020 to extending the Atlantic Population Canada goose season later than the current season end date. Comments related to waterfowl blinds included suggestions to eliminate stationary blind laws and a reduction of the stationary waterfowl blind buffer from 500 to 250 yards. Eliminating the day of the week

waterfowl hunting restrictions on Game Farm Marsh WMA, expanding the Tundra Swan hunting boundary, and establishing an upland bird dog training season on public land were also recommended during the scoping period.

General (60 comments)

If the list of species provided within the online form didn't seem to match the regulation change on which they desired to provide input, constituents were able to "write in" in a category to better describe the regulatory change they desired. Most constituents using this feature simply wrote something indicating "All Species"; however, topics related to hunting dogs, licenses, and license fees were common. The most common change sought by this group was allowing Sunday hunting on public lands with constituents who had limited opportunities to hunt on private lands desiring more opportunities to pursue the sport they loved. Several individuals requested a "Lifetime Sportsman Hunting License" to include all licenses necessary to hunt in Virginia while several other individuals wanted reduced license fees on various types of licenses. A few individuals wanted a deer hound training season while other individuals desired regulation changes to limit deer hunting with hounds in their area. Finally, 2 people commented on fishing topics and 2 constituents commented on wildlife rehabilitation permits. The fishing comments were shared with the Aquatic Resources Division and the wildlife rehabilitation permit comments were shared with the Permits section.

Conclusion

Because some comment forms included multiple, suggested changes, the total number of individual comments (1,394) reviewed by staffs exceeded the total number of comment forms (1,099) received by the Department. One issue on which the Department seems to be receiving a growing number of comments is Sunday hunting on public lands which appears to be a common thread across numerous game species. As with past regulation amendment cycles, deer and bear hunting season issues remain the focus of the vast majority of individuals providing comments. Further, the types of regulatory modification suggestions provided by the public remains very consistent as well: increase harvest opportunities where populations are doing well or damage concerns are prevalent, reduce harvest opportunities where populations appear to have declined, increase opportunities for youth, expressions of interest in or concern for certain hunting/trapping techniques and seasons, etc. The consistency displayed in the public's comments on the Department's wildlife regulations enables staffs to monitor issues continuously and collect/evaluate biological and sociological data trends and patterns to develop regulation amendments to best ensure appropriate management of our wildlife resources to meet the needs of Virginia's diverse citizenry.